# REQUEST FOR SUPPRESSION OF *AMPLYCEPHALUS* KUHL AND VAN HASSELT, 1822 (REPTILIA: SERPENTES). Z.N.(S.) 1840

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The genus of snakes presently known by the name of *Pareas* Wagler (1830 : 181), on which the family-group name PAREINAE Romer (1956 : 583) is based, has long been known to be antedated by *Amblycephalus* Boie (1826 : 238), which in turn has been widely recognized since 1943 (Malcolm Smith, 1943 : 116) as unavailable through junior homonymy with *Amblycephalus* Zeder (1803, a genus of Cestoda).

Not so widely recognized is the fact that *Amblycephalus* Boie, 1826, is antedated by another synonym, *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, which appeared in a letter printed in its original language or in translated versions, in three different journals before 1826. The earliest appears to have been the original Dutch version (1822a), but it was promptly followed by a German translation (1822b), in turn followed two years later by a French version (1824). Malcolm Smith (1943 : 116) regarded the German version (others not noted) as a *nomen nudum* and therefore lacking nomenclatural status. However, Neave (1939 : 165) and Schulze and Kükenthal (1926 : 153) presumably regarded the name as available.

The Dutch version (1822a : 101) pertaining to *Amplycephalus* follows in its entirety: " En eindelijk hebben ons vier andere Slangen gelegenheid gegeven, vier nieuwe geflachten voortestellen, van welke ik u meer zeggen zal, wanneer wij eerst meer soorten zullen verzameld hebben. Het eene *Amplycephalus* van ons genoemd, onderscheidt zich door eene ware mops physionomie van alle andere Slangen, op eene zeer in het oog loopende wijze." This passage translates as follows: " And finally four other snakes have given us the opportunity to bring forward four new genera, of which I will say more to you when we finally have brought together more species. The one named *Amplycephalus* by us is conspicuously distinguished from all other snakes by a true pug physiognomy."

The German translation (1822b : 474) is an exact, verbatim translation of the preceding, and need not be repeated here.

The French version (1824 : 81), attributed erroneously to Kuhl alone (since it is explicitly sourced, as indicated after the title, from the Dutch publication), is quoted verbatim as follows: " Genre *Amplycephalus*. La physiognomie des serpens que nous avons séparés sous ce nom générique ressemble d'une manière frappante à celle d'un chien carlin." The English translation of this version follows: " Genus *Amplycephalus*. The physiognomy of the snake which we have separated under this generic name resembles in a striking manner that of a bulldog." The French version thus is extensively paraphrased in comparison with the Dutch and German versions, but it adds no new information.

Still another usage by Kuhl and van Hasselt of *Amplycephalus*, according to Schulze and Kükenthal (1926 : 153), occurs in the *Algemeene Konst en Letterbode*, 1822, vol. 2, p. 15. No article by these authors actually occurs on that or any other page of volume two of the journal; lacking direct access to the journal, I am unable to account for the reference in the Nomenclator. It may well be a lapsus for the work in vol. 2 of Ferussac's journal (Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1824 : 81), despite the discrepancies in date and page numbers.

Brief and inadequate though these descriptions of *Amplycephalus* by Kuhl and van Hasselt are, even the earliest (1822a) is a description, thus complying with the requirement for acceptability of Article 12 of the International Code. The descriptions are so similar that one is no better than another. The important point, in present context, is that *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, is an available name, not a *nomen nudum*.

The earliest influential adoption of *Pareas* Wagler, 1830, came in 1864 (Günther, 1864 : 326). Gradually herpetologists abandoned use of *Amblycephalus*, and since 1943, when Malcolm Smith (1943 : 116) publicized use of *Pareas*, that name has been used to the exclusion of the other. Authors accepting or citing *Amblycephalus* Boie, however, usually accepted the 1827 work by Boie (1827 : 519) as the original source of the name, because it contains the first explicit description of the genus, which there was treated as monotypic, containing only the new species *A. laevis*. Boie attributed the name *Amblycephalus* to Kuhl, but cited no author for *A. laevis*.

Schulze and Kükenthal (1926 : 126), however, cite a work by Schlegel (1827 : 293) as the original proposal for *Amblycephalus*, antedating that of Boie (1827 : 519). Schulze and Kükenthal (1926 : 126) give the date 1826 for Schlegel's work, and attribute the name *Amblycephalus* to Boie and Schlegel in that work—both in error. No. 3 of vol. 20 of *Isis* von Oken contains the first sections of the Literature-Register for 1827, and therefore could not have appeared in 1826; the first two numbers of the same volume are explicitly dated 1826 on the title page (there is no title-page date for any other numbers of the volume), and both contain Literature-Registers for 1826.

The authorship of *Amblycephalus* as it appears in Schlegel's work is not clear-cut. The name is directly attributed to Kuhl. There is no description—merely a list of five species referred to it. However the introduction makes clear that Schlegel had been allowed to examine an unpublished manuscript by Boie in which numerous new genera were described, and on p. 289 he states: " Kerrn Boies neue Genera folgen nun in systematischer Ordnung." The genera are merely listed, with referred species, the new genera so indicated, some with Boie's name, others with Kuhl's name. In Boie's manuscript the name *Amblycephalus* presumably was attributed to Kuhl, and that is how Schlegel cited it. A case could be made for attribution of the name to any one of the three authorities of Schlegel, Boie or Kuhl. It is perhaps critically important that Schlegel frequently referred, after p. 289, to Boie in the third person, stating that to this genus or that Boie assigned certain species, and then Schlegel added certain others on his own initiative. In other words, Schlegel clearly appears to be rendering *information* derived from Boie's manuscript *in his own words*, and in his own way, with his own interpretation of them. Accordingly the authorship of *Amblycephalus*, as of Schlegel's article, properly belongs to

Schlegel*, according to Article 50 of the International Code of Zoological Nomenclature, despite the unfortunate and, presumably, unintended plagiarism. The workers of this period, however, extensively plagiarized each other, apparently with little appreciation of the priorities of their piracy.

Actually, however, the earliest appearance of the name *Amblycephalus* occurred in a work that has apparently been completely overlooked (Boie, 1826 : 238). Boie attributed the generic name to Kuhl, making clear that the name is an emendation of Kuhl (and van Hasselt's) *Amplycephalus.* It is possible that he and other, subsequent, authors assumed that *Amplycephalus* was a typographical error, but there is no certainty; the name was thus spelled at least three times in Kuhl and van Hasselt's accounts in 1822 and 1824. It is unlikely that they had any opportunity to correct the *lapsus*, if such it was, but they could easily have meant to use that spelling, deriving the name from the Latin *amplia*, which indeed is the source of the insect name *Amplicephalus*, and would be equally as appropriate as the Greek word *ambly*.

Schlegel's (1827 : 293) proposal of *Amblycephalus* has been disregarded by herpetologists primarily because of the absence of any characterization whatever of the genus, and since Boie's treatment (1826 : 238) is almost identical with that of Schlegel, the same objection could be raised relative to the 1826 work. However, no more than citation of a referred species name is required for availability of a generic name prior to 1931. Boie referred five nominal species to the genus: "*A. laevis* Kuhl n. esp.—*Dipsas carinata* Kuhl n. esp.—*Col. Mikani* Fitz.—*coccineus* Blum. Et *Rhinostoma proboscideum* Fitz.; se rapprochent de ce genre." Unfortunately the only names now referred to *Amblycephalus* were then *nomina nuda* (*A. laevis* Boie, 1827, *Dipsas carinata* Boie, 1828). *Coluber Mikani* Schlegel, 1837, was also then a *nomen nudum*, and is now referred to *Sibynomorphus* Fitzinger, 1843. *Coluber coccineus* Blumenbach, 1788, is the only nominal species cited that was then (1826) available; that species is now referred to the genus *Cemophora* Cope, 1860. "*Rhinostoma proboscideum* Fitzinger" presumably would not figure in the problem of type for the genus, since it was merely stated to "approach" *Amblycephalus.* The question is, however, immaterial since it too was a *nomen nudum*; although the generic name *Rhinostoma* appeared in 1826 (Fitzinger, 1826 : 29), Fitzinger failed to give any diagnosis or definition whatever of the two nominal species (1826 : 56) he referred to it (*R. rufo-fusca*, *R. proboscidea*), which therefore remained *nomina nuda* as of 1826. Each name was referred to a new genus (*Rhinosiphon*, *Rhinaspis*, respectively) by Fitzinger in 1843 (pp. 26, 25, respectively), still without any indication whatever. Not until 1854 was a species actually assigned to *Rhinostoma*, which is still recognized.

Most herpetologists (*e.g.* Malcolm Smith, 1943 : 116) who were aware of the existence of *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, attributed the name to the *Isis* work (1822b) and regarded it a *nomen nudum.* As previously stated, it cannot be so construed; it is an available name. Furthermore, Articles 11 (c) (i) and 69 (a) (ii) make it clear that a generic name, before 1931, is not rendered unavailable by absence of any referred nominal species. Actually no nominal species has ever been referred explicitly to *Amplycephalus*, but it is sufficiently apparent that Schlegel and Boie merely emended that name (or substituted another for it) in erection of *Amblycephalus*, which is thus a junior objective synonym of *Amplycephalus*. Fixation of the type of *Amblycephalus* simultaneously fixes the type of *Amplycephalus* (Article 67 (i)).

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* Schlegel used the vernacular *Amblycephale*, which is not available. Editor

Since *Amblycephalus* is really monotypic, the only alternative to acceptance of *Coluber coccineus* Blumenbach, 1788, as type of both *Amplycephalus* and *Amblycephalus* is to appeal to the Commission to set aside that species as type, since it clearly does not agree with the generic description, as provided by Article 70 of the Code. If the International Commission were requested to arbitrate the case, it is clear that the species most appropriate for type designation is the sole one assigned by Boie (1827 : 519) in the work that gave the first full diagnosis of both genus and its contained new species: *Amblycephalus laevis* Boie (1827 : 519–520).

To summarize, *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, is not a *nomen nudum* as has generally been assumed. It cannot, however, be referred to synonymy with the currently accepted name *Pareas* Wagler, 1830, since its type species, fixed through its emended objective synonym *Amblycephalus*, is *Coluber coccineus* Blumenbach, unless a species (presumably *Amblycephalus laevis* Boie) is arbitrarily fixed by action of the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature. The two alternatives of replacement of *Cemophora* Cope, 1860, or *Pareas* Wagler, 1830, by *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, can be averted only if the name *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, is suppressed by action of the International Commission (*Amblycephalus* Boie, 1826, is already unavailable through junior homonymy).

Four courses of action now are to be considered. First, the automatic provisions of the Code could be upheld, resulting in replacement of *Cemophora* Cope, 1860, by *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822. The consistent acceptance of *Cemophora* for over 100 years, and inapplicability of the characters of *Amplycephalus* to *coccinea*, make this choice completely unacceptable.

Secondly, the name *Amplycephalus*, which has never been recognized as valid, could be suppressed thus assuring maintenance of current nomenclature, including *Pareas* Wagler, 1830, in lieu of *Amblycephalus* Boie, 1826. The name *Pareas* is of significance as the type of the subfamily PAREINAE Romer, 1956, and may thus merit conservation. The family-group name, however, based upon *Pareas*, is not threatened by any other name, and accordingly its conservation is not now warranted. Conservation of a family-group name junior to others in the same group with which it may be associated could jeopardize the security of the older names.

There would be some merit in a third choice, namely the suppression not only of *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, but also *Amblycephalus* Zeder, 1803, since the latter name has never been utilized; it was proposed as a substitute for *Rhytelminthus* Zeder, 1800, in turn proposed as a substitute for *Tricuspidaria* Rudolphi, 1793, universally accepted as a subjective junior synonym of *Triaenophorus* Rudolphi, 1793 (see Yamaguti, 1959). This course would free *Amblycephalus* Boie, 1826, and the family name AMBLYCEPHALIDAE Günther, 1864, both of which were widely accepted in herpetology until 1943.

Restoration of the latter two names to their former position would require action by the Commission to establish *Amblycephalus laevis* Boie, 1827, as type of *Amblycephalus* Boie, 1826, for otherwise the names would have to be shifted to the snake now known as *Cemophora coccinea* (Blumenbach, 1788) Cope, 1860.

A fourth possibility would be to request designation of *Amblycephalus laevis* Boie, 1827, as the type of *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, replacing *Coluber coccinea* Blumenbach, 1788, as type of that genus. This action would invalidate *Pareas* Wagler, 1830, and would raise the question of the proper family-group name for the genus. The name AMBLYCEPHALIDAE could not be used because of junior homonymy of its type genus, unless *Amblycephalus* Zeder, 1803, were simultaneously suppressed. The name PAREINAE would, by the present Code (Article 40a), be perpetuated despite junior synonymy of the type genus (*Pareas* Wagler, 1830) with *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822. Any merit in salvation of *Amplycephalus* is offset by the necessary retention of the family-group name PAREINAE.

In the interest of nomenclatural stability—not only in perpetuation of a few names of relatively minor importance, but in avoidance of the inevitable complexities of any of the alternatives—it is clear that the second course described above would be strongly preferable to any of the others.

Accordingly, the International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is requested:

(1) to use its plenary powers to suppress the name *Amplycephalus* Kuhl and van Hasselt, 1822, for purposes of the Law of Priority but not of the Law of Homonymy;

(2) to place that name on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Generic Names in Zoology;

(3) to place the generic name *Pareas* Wagler, 1830 (gender: masculine), type-species " *Dipsas carinata* Reinw." (= *Dipsas carinata* Schlegel, 1837) by monotypy, on the Official List of Generic Names in Zoology; and

(4) to place the name *carinatus*, as published in the combination *Dipsas carinatus* Schlegel, 1837* (type-species of *Pareas*) on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology.

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* Boie (1828 : 1035) is often credited with this name, but in error. He does use the name *Amblycephalus carinatus* on the indicated page, but the name is a *nomen nudum*, since he says only that he found a specimen once, while hunting insects, under the bark of trunks of fallen trees: there is no indication whatever of characteristics of the specimen itself, and citation of location or habitat is insufficient to provide an " indication " even under the permissive rules for pre-1931 works. The next usage of the name apparently occurred in Schlegel's great work of 1837, where it appears as *Dipsas carinata* (1837 : 285–287, pl. 11, figs. 26–28).

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